

tangerine soda by meikusa (orphan_account)

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Aged-Up Character(s), Byeler - Freeform, Established Relationship, Ficlet, Fluff without Plot, Implied Sexual Content, Late Night Conversations, M/M, Mike Wheeler Loves Will Byers, Mike-Centric, Period Typical Bigotry, Recreational Drug Use, Short & Sweet, Slice of Life, Their around 17/18

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Summary:

"But this? He isn't afraid of this anymore, of what they have or what it's become. It feels big and important in a way he doesn't have words for yet, but that makes him think of the way he used to feel, like when he would imagine the future in ten, twenty, thirty years out."

In a smoky car, late night, Mike has a revelation about the mundane.

tangerine soda

The weirdest song comes on one of the stations when it's late night and Will doesn't want to go home but isn't saying so, and they end up sharing a joint in Mike's car. Mike isn't sure if the singer is actually saying nonsense or if he's just baked out of his mind, but Will looks sort of confused too.

"What the hell is this?" Mike snort-giggles, and reaches to turn the dial and find another station, but Will knocks his hand out of the way.

"Leave it," he says, and closes his eyes. He leans back in his seat and breathes out smoke and nods his head just the tiniest bit to the beat. And Mike looks, because he's high, and because he thinks Will is beautiful.

"This is good. Like foggy night music," Will says, eyes still closed. It's clear, crisp and dry outside, and Mike starts laughing.

"Dude. First of all, there is no fog. Secondly, you can't even see the very obvious *lack* of fog because it's so damn dark outside," he says, cracking up, and that coaxes a genuine laugh from Will's chest.

"*Shut up, Wheeler* . It doesn't matter, this song just sounds like a foggy night."

Will cracks one eye and puts a finger to his lips. Mike tries to be quiet, and leans over to kiss him. Because he realizes he can do that now at any time. He's kissing Will, and Will is kissing back. Mike's hand is on his face, cradling his jaw like he's something sweet. And Will's fingers are combing through his hair and holding on, tilting his head so Mike can kiss him deeper.

He runs his hands down Mike's sides, looks at him as he tucks his fingertips under the hem of his t-shirt and traces his stomach, his hips, his back. Will is smiling at him like he's just done something really good, and his stomach is flopping around like crazy as he tilts his head up to kiss Will again.

Will's tongue is in his mouth and his hands are fisting into his shirt and then he starts kissing down his neck and collarbone, and he's not really thinking about much anymore at all.

He's not scared anymore, either. Just exhilarated.

Will swallows, his cheeks flushing in embarrassment in the speckled light filtering through the basement. He lifts his hands, and Mike realizes for the first time that he's holding something.

*It's a tape spilling in a tangled, kinked-up mess that crinkles in Will's fingers. The label on it has faded from overuse, the Sharpie barely legible anymore, but Mike doesn't need to look any closer to know in his heart it says: **Tangerine Soda.***

He worries about Will a lot. It's been a few years since everything happened, and most of the time Will seems okay. He seems happy,

even.

He and Will circled each other from the day they met on the swings, pushing each other's buttons, but never going too far, trying to edge one another off the stupid fucking social ladder. He usually thinks back to that metaphor, or simile or whatever, about the frog in boiling water sometimes. It's hard to really see how they got from being best friends to *here*. He slowly boiled, and he's totally unrecognizable to his old self because now? Mike is fucking *fascinated* with every part of Will Byers. But he isn't exactly sure there was ever a time he hasn't been.

The simple fact is: Mike isn't like Will. He can't randomly lean over and whisper, *your hands are driving me insane right now*, or stutter out a description of exactly what he wants to do to him. It feels like too much, like handing over that last bit of control he has over his heart. He gave Will that control from the first time they kissed, and he gives more every day, so much that it's almost frightening in its capacity.

He's in that place between reality and dreamland where he could say or do anything and Will would absentmindedly agree, stroking Mike's hair, eyes fluttering between open and closed with no clear pattern. He called it *euphoric*, once, the night when Will held his hand under the stars and then begged him to share some of the poetry that he keeps hidden in his journal. Will loves his poems. He always gets what they mean.

Divine lovers, he thinks. He loves the feel of those words wrapped around his heart almost as much as he loves the feel of Will's hands roaming his body.

And Mike isn't a total dumbass. He knows that being queer in rural

Indiana in the age of AIDS and Reagan means being afraid. The name of the game is survival.

But this? He isn't afraid of this anymore, of what they have or what it's become. It feels big and important in a way he doesn't have words for yet, but that makes him think of the way he used to feel, like when he would imagine the future in ten, twenty, thirty years out. That future is long gone, and it wasn't ever quite right in the way he wanted it to be at eight.

This feels *right*. Settled in his bones and good, like the last 45 seconds of the weird song, the switch of the new melody, Bonnie Tyler's voice when the key changes and she sounds like she knows exactly what it's worth to not be afraid anymore.

It's been a while now that Mike hasn't been having nightmares. They're still around - some nights he wakes up sweating and tense, expecting a monster to launch him back into reality, the smell of the tunnels in his nose - but lately they've taken a backseat to other dreams. They're mostly mundane, everyday shit that's barely distinguishable from real life, which messes with his head when he can't remember if he was talking about *Back to the Future* with the party yesterday at lunch or if his brain just made that up.

He knows his brain isn't making this up.

He can catalogue every moment Will's lips have touched any part of his body.

Will's kisses linger, that's the thing. Maybe it's the way he cups Mike's

cheek so gently, fingers pressing into skin like a validation— *I'm here.*

Arms slung around shoulders. Full-bodied snuggles. Strong fingers, gentle presses. Skin on skin.

And kisses. All of the kisses.

It makes him feel warm to be on the receiving end of Will Byers' affection.

These small declarations of love come easy to them—always have, since the beginning—but now they've never felt truer.

He's stupid in the way he hasn't ever been for anyone else before, doing shit like crying in bed, even when they get into the dumbest of arguments, and raining kisses on Will's cheeks, his nose, his forehead just to make him laugh.

Maybe it'll crash and burn. He'll ruin it, or his parents will.

Maybe. But he's gonna try anyway. Give it all he's got.

"I love you."

Will smiles into the kiss and replies easy as ever, *"I know."*

Author's Note:

I have literally no idea what the 'tangerine soda' cassette tape is btw. And I wrote this in the span of fifteen minutes at three am, so hopefully this doesn't totally suck.